



IOWA CAUCUS

HEALTH CARE

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was signed into law by President Barack Obama on March 23. The law (along with the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010) is the principal health care reform legislation of the 111th Congress.





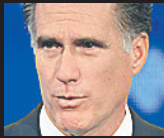

Commonly called “Obamacare” by opponents, it authorizes changes for the private health insurance industry and public health insurance programs, increases insurance coverage of pre-existing conditions and expands access to insurance to over 30 million Americans.

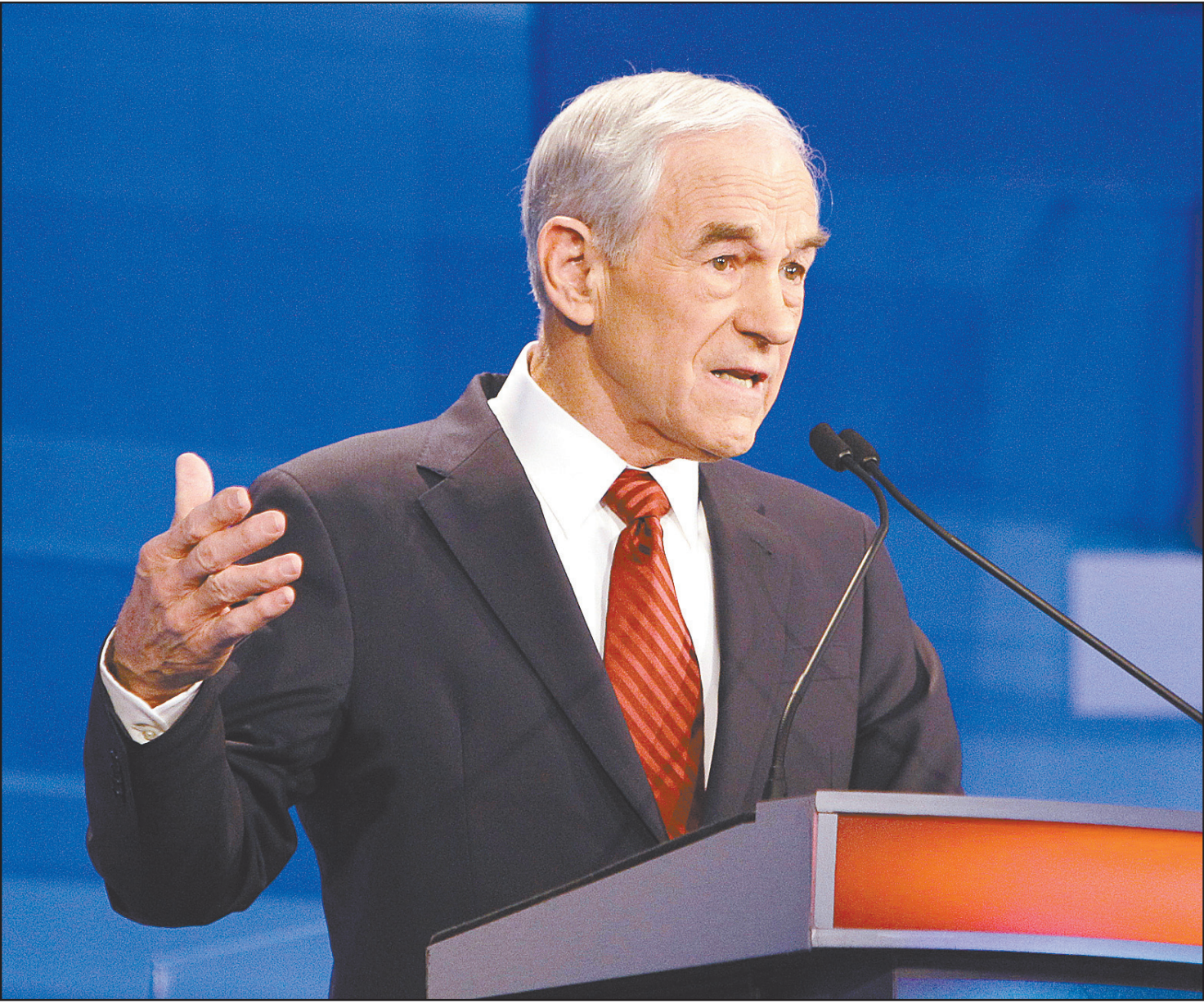
A majority of the states, and numerous organizations and individuals have filed actions in federal court challenging its constitutionality.

The Supreme Court has agreed to review the lawsuits, and has scheduled over five hours for oral arguments in March.

Repeal of the so-called “Obamacare” is a priority of Republican presidential candidates this year and dominates their talk on health care reform.

THE CANDIDATES' VIEWS

 Bachmann	 Gingrich	 Paul	 Perry	 Romney	 Santorum
“Senior citizens will lose control over what they actually get in Medicare because a politically-appointed 15-member board that's unelected and unresponsive to the will of the people will make decisions on what care we get and what care we don't.”	“The lesson of nearly 400 years of entrepreneurial technology and science-based free-market technology is fairly clear. You should expect to get more choices of higher quality at falling prices. This is the opposite of some left-wing politicians and the scarcity mentality of too many bureaucrats.”	“Why exactly should Americans be required, by force of taxation, to fund retirement or medical care for senior citizens who are comfortable financially? And if taxpayers provide health care and retirement benefits to older Americans who are less well off, can't we just call it welfare instead of maintaining the charade of insurance and trust funds?”	“I think every program needs to stand the sunshine of righteous scrutiny. Whether it's Social Security, whether it's Medicare. You've got \$115 trillion worth of unfunded liability in those three. They're bankrupt. It's a Ponzi scheme.”	“At its core of this debate is the question of what creates better patient outcomes and more efficiency: free enterprise and consumer-driven markets or government management and regulations?”	“I reject that people die in America because of lack of health insurance. People die in America because people die in America. And people make poor decisions with respect to their health and health care.”



AP PHOTO

Rep. Ron Paul of Texas says Medicare and other entitlement programs worsen the government's financial problems.

Republicans all say no to ‘Obamacare’

Candidates differ on solutions, agree on getting rid of law

By JOHN SKIPPER
(Mason City) Globe Gazette

How Americans receive their health care — and how they pay for it — is a battleground issue between Republicans and Democrats as the 2012 election cycle nears.

President Barack Obama campaigned in 2008 on a pledge to make health insurance available to everyone.

His program, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, was passed by both houses of Congress and will be implemented in stages for about the next decade.

Unless it is repealed.

And repeal of “Obamacare,” as the Republicans call it, is a high priority with GOP presidential candidates.

They also favor reducing the federal investment in Medicare and expanding state flexibility in managing Medicaid.

Michele Bachmann, the conservative House member from Minnesota, has made repeal of “Obamacare” a cornerstone issue of her campaign.

She said she will campaign actively all over the country to gain 13 Republican seats in the Senate, enough votes to make the repeal veto-proof.

Mitt Romney, former governor of Massachusetts, has been criticized by rivals because he signed a bill into law in Massachusetts that is similar to the federal plan.

But Romney has argued it is not the same because it applied only to his state — and each state should have that discretion.

Ron Paul, the former Libertarian candidate, points out medicine is not mentioned anywhere in the Constitution.

While the candidates oppose what is on the books, they differ in regard to what they would do.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry wants states to be able to opt out of Medicare. Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman, who isn't campaigning in Iowa, helped create Utah's health insurance exchange. Paul, the Texas congressman who is a retired doctor, thinks health care should be more of a personal responsibility than a government mandate. Former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum also favors fewer government entitlement programs.

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich caused a firestorm of criticism within his own party

when, shortly after announcing his candidacy, he blasted House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan's Medicare reform plan as “radical.”

Ryan's proposal was to make Medicare a voucher plan to help curtail costs.

Bachmann voted for it but later softened her support, saying the plan could hurt senior citizens.

Huntsman, Santorum and Romney also said they supported it but might modify it.

Perry caused a stir earlier this year when he referred to Medicare and Medicaid as a “Ponzi scheme.”

Bachmann supports reducing future Medicare benefits for people who are 55 and younger.

Gingrich favors structural changes to Medicare that would give beneficiaries more options and less government control.

Paul, who has made the nation's debt a primary issue in his campaign, argues Medicare and other entitlement programs worsen the government's financial problems.

Romney said as president he would offer his own plan to reform Medicare and Social Security without cutting benefits to current seniors.

Santorum voted for the Medicare prescription drug program in 2003 but now considers

it a mistake because it is “universal in nature.”

Herman Cain, who is no longer in the race, can lay claim to being among the first to publicly challenge universal health care.

In 1994, President Clinton held a town hall meeting to tout his health care plan. Cain, for former head of Godfather's Pizza and then head of the National Restaurant Association, challenged Clinton, saying his plan would have put Godfather's Pizza out of business.

He then walked the president through the math, showing how the added health care costs would wipe out the pizza chain's profit margin.

Obama's program, among other things, assures health insurance for millions of Americans who haven't had it, assures coverage for pre-existing illnesses and keeps young adults on their parents' coverage until age 26.

Alan Simpson, the former Republican senator from Wyoming, summed up Republicans' views of the the president's health care reforms in a recent National Public Radio interview.

“You can call it Obamacare, Elviscard or I-don't-care. Whatever you call it, it isn't going to fly,” he said.

CURRENT HEALTH CARE LAW

Here is a summary of the current law that Republican candidates want to drastically change or repeal:

COST: Estimated \$940 billion over 10 years.

DEFICIT: Government projections show deficit reduction of \$143 billion over the first 10 years and by \$1.2 trillion in the second 10 years.

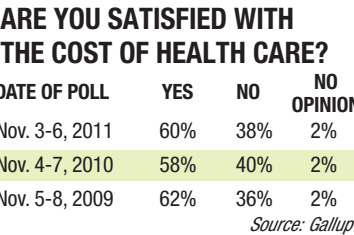
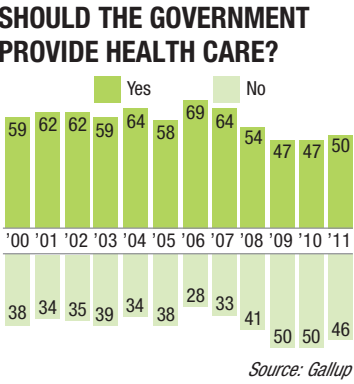
COVERAGE: Would expand coverage to 32 million who are uninsured. The uninsured and self-employed would be able to purchase insurance through state-based exchanges with subsidies for those with income between the 133 percent and 400 percent of poverty level. Separate exchanges would be created for small businesses, effective 2014. Funding would be available to states to establish exchanges within one year of enactment and until Jan. 1, 2015.

PAYING FOR THE PLAN: Starting in 2012, the Medicare payroll tax will be expanded to include unearned income. That will be a 3.8 percent tax on investment income for families making more than \$250,000 per year (\$200,000 for individuals). Beginning in 2018, insurance companies will pay a 40 percent excise tax on so-called “Cadillac” high-end insurance plans worth more than \$27,500 for families (\$10,200 for individuals). Dental and vision plans are exempt. The plan closes the Medicare prescription drug “doughnut hole” by 2020. Seniors who hit the doughnut hole by 2010 will receive a \$250 rebate. Beginning this year, seniors in the gap receive a 50 percent discount on brand name drugs. The bill also includes \$500 billion in Medicare cuts over the next decade. But it expands Medicaid to include 133 percent of federal poverty level which is \$29,327 for a family of four. It requires states to expand Medicaid to include childless adults starting in 2014. The federal government pays 100 percent of costs for covering newly eligible individuals through 2016. Illegal immigrants are not eligible for Medicaid.

INSURANCE REFORMS: Six months after enactment, insurance companies could no longer deny children coverage based on a pre-existing condition. Starting in 2014, insurance companies cannot deny coverage to anyone with pre-existing conditions. Insurance companies must allow children to stay on their parents' insurance plans until age 26.

INDIVIDUAL MANDATE: In 2016, when fully implemented, everyone must purchase health insurance or face a \$695 annual fine. There are some exceptions for low-income people.

EMPLOYER MANDATE: Employers with more than 50 employees must provide health insurance or pay a fine of \$2,000 per worker each year if any worker receives federal subsidies to purchase health insurance. Fines are applied to entire number of employees minus some allowances.



Black Hawk County Republicans, Democrats adopt one-stop shopping approach to caucuses

Black Hawk County voters have it easy on caucus night.

Republicans and Democrats each let voters from all precincts meet in a single location. For Republicans it is the UNI-Dome in Cedar Falls. Democrats will meet at Central Middle School in Waterloo.

The Republicans expect a big

crowd as the caucuses feature a competitive field for the presidential nomination. Republicans will open the doors at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday and encourage people to come early to get a chance to meet candidates, all of whom have been invited to the caucus site. The caucus proceedings will start at 7 p.m.

Democrats will open the doors at 5 p.m. The caucus events are slated to start at 6:30 p.m. with delegate elections at 7 p.m. or later.

In other counties, caucus sites will be broken down by voting precincts.

The state Republican party has established an application for

iPhones and Androids to help caucusgoers find the site where they can attend their precinct caucus. It can be found by searching for “IowaGOP2012” in the respective application stores for those mobile devices. Voters can also visit www.iowagop.org/caucus and click a link to the secretary

of state's precinct finder. Once the precinct is located, voters can go back to the Iowa GOP site, click on “Find My Caucus” and the click “View by County” to locate their precinct caucus location.

Democrats have a similar tool on their website at www.iowademocrats.org.

2012

IOWA CAUCUS








ECONOMY

Iowa’s unemployment rate, at 6 percent, is one of the lowest in the country. But that’s higher than usual for this state. That, coupled with a historically high national jobless rate, a damaged housing market and low consumer confidence has made the economy a singularly important issue in this year’s Republican presidential nomination contest.

All the Republicans in the race have been harshly critical of President Barack Obama’s 2009 stimulus package, and they reject the idea of using government spending to fill the gap during times when private demand for goods and services is down.

The GOP candidates have all touted cuts in federal spending and taxes as central elements of their economic plans. But within that framework, there are some differences in emphasis and substance.

THE CANDIDATES’ VIEWS

 Bachmann	 Cain	 Gingrich	 Paul	 Perry	 Romney	 Santorum
Allow foreign profits to come home tax free until Dec. 31 and tax at 5 percent after. Cut spending and phase out Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac; repeal health care reform law and financial industry regulations known as Dodd-Frank. Enforce immigration laws. Bachmann opposed nearly \$900 billion federal stimulus in early 2009 but voted for \$192 billion plan in July. She has also urged expansion of domestic energy supplies as a way to boost the number of American jobs.	His 9-9-9 proposal would institute 9 percent flat taxes on individual income, business and sales. There would be no payroll, estate or capital gains taxes. The plan is the centerpiece of his economic platform. He also proposes reducing regulations and says the market will regulate itself, aided by “the watchful eyes of investors and consumers.” Cain supported Wall Street bailout but says it was executed poorly.	Extend Bush-era tax cuts, eliminate capital gains tax and cut corporate rate to 12.5 percent. Move toward optional 15 percent flat individual rate. Repeal financial industry regulations known as Dodd-Frank, as well as accounting regulations enacted in 2002; restrict Federal Reserve’s role to controlling inflation, not achieving maximum employment. Doing both, he says, weakens the dollar. Gingrich also has been critical of Fed chief Ben Bernanke, saying he’d fire him.	Return to the gold standard, eliminate the Federal Reserve and let gold and silver be used as legal tender. U.S. monetary policy has devalued the dollar, Paul says. Set corporate tax rate at 15 percent, extend Bush-era tax cuts and end inheritance tax. He also would eliminate most federal regulations. Paul has proposed cutting the federal budget by \$1 trillion, or more than 25 percent, in a single year. He also would eliminate five federal departments.	Optional flat tax of 20 percent, cut corporate rate to 20 percent. Moratorium on pending regulations; review all put in effect since 2008. Sunset regulations unless Congress explicitly renews them. Repeal health care reform, Dodd-Frank and 2002 accounting regulations. Cap federal spending, demand balanced budget amendment. Allow overseas profits to be taxed at 5.25 percent, down from current 35 percent. Perry also would rid the tax code of renewable energy subsidies, including ethanol.	Cut corporate tax rate to 25 percent, keep marginal rates as they are while pursuing, long term, a flatter structure; eliminate inheritance tax. Pursue more trade deals, less regulation, increase energy production and move away from “unhealthy green jobs obsession.” Replace jobless benefits with unemployment savings accounts. Eliminate Dodd-Frank, revise accounting regulations, speed up drilling permits, assess duties on China if it doesn’t float its currency.	Spur jobs by eliminating corporate taxes for manufacturers, drill for more oil and gas and slash regulations. Cut tax on profits earned overseas from 35 percent to 5 percent. Extend current capital gains and dividend tax rates. Put aside “dream” of green jobs and focus on domestic energy production. Enact balanced budget amendment and reduce federal spending. Eliminate Dodd-Frank and 2002 accounting regulations. He says both enshrine “too big to fail” policies.



Republican presidential candidates speak about the economy during the CNBC debate two weeks ago in Auburn Hills, Mich.

Candidates differ on how to create jobs

Cain pushes 9-9-9; Romney wants revised tax code

By ED TIBBETTS
etibbetts@qctimes.com

It was nearly an hour into the CNBC debate among the Republican presidential candidates on the economy two weeks ago, and a national political analyst tweeted there hadn’t been a single confrontation.

There’s a good reason for that. For the most part, the candidates have mostly stuck to a recipe of lower taxes, free trade and less regulation in laying out their plans for the nation’s economy. But even though they’re mostly harmonious on the topic, there are some differences in how they propose to reshape the tax code, the degree to which they would change the government’s regulatory structure and how they would deal with renewable energy incentives.

A Cato Institute economist also says the records of some of the candidates indicate they aren’t as conservative as their rhetoric would indicate.

The Republican presidential candidates are making their pitches on the economy to a state that hasn’t suffered as much as most of the rest of the country, at least in terms of employment.

With a jobless rate at 6 percent, Iowa is three points lower than the nation. But in a state where the annual jobless rate has gone above

4.5 percent only twice between 1989 and 2008, the economy is a concern.

The two candidates who have polled the highest in Iowa lately — Mitt Romney and Herman Cain — offer a strikingly different approach to the economy.

Cain centers nearly all of his energy on his 9-9-9 plan, which would jettison most of the current federal tax code and set flat 9 percent rates on individual income, business income and on sales.

“My proposal is the only one that solves the problem by throwing out the current tax code, which has been a mess for decades,” he said during the CNBC debate.

A Brookings Institution study said it would raise taxes on most Americans, but Cain has rejected that.

Romney is more judicious with the tax code. He proposes lowering the corporate tax rate and extending the Bush-era cuts. But it isn’t as revolutionary as Cain’s plan. His 59-page economic plan, however, is more broad-based.

“Ultimately, I’d love to see — see us come up with a plan that simplifies the code and lowers rates for everybody,” Romney said during the CNBC debate. “But right now, let’s get the job done first that has to be done immediately. Let’s lower the tax rates on middle-income Americans.”

Meanwhile, Texas Gov. Rick Perry and ex-House Speaker Newt Gingrich have proposed optional flat tax plans.

Ron Paul criticizes today’s monetary system for devaluing the dollar. He’s also proposed dramatically cutting more than

25 percent out of the federal budget in a single year.

Nearly all the candidates have proposed ditching the Dodd-Frank financial industry regulations. Some go further and say they would end the accounting industry regulations created after the Enron failure in 2002.

And, of course, they all say they would kill the health care reform law they deride as Obamacare.

An expert in Iowa’s economy said he sees precious little in the GOP plans that get at the economy’s current problem — a lack of demand.

“It’s not a crisis of capital. It’s a crisis of consumption,” said Dave Swenson, an associate scientist in the economics department at Iowa State University. “To offer up an opportunity to reinvest in more capacity doesn’t lead to more jobs.”

Chris Edwards, an economist at the libertarian Cato Institute, rejects that view. He said the Obama administration’s approach the past two years has failed and companies have a choice where to invest, including at lower-cost locations overseas.

“There’s something else going on,” he said. “It’s about business fears. Investor fears about the future.”

Edwards said all the candidates have offered similar rhetoric, but in some cases, their records belie that. He singles out Romney and Gingrich.

An analysis by the conservative Club for Growth faults Gingrich, in particular, for heavily utilizing tax credits while in office, which it says allows the government to “pick winners and losers.”

Gingrich, on the other hand, has pointed to the years after Republi-

cans took over control of the House in 1994 — when he was their leader — as among the most prosperous in American history, citing a cut in the capital gains tax.

Romney, meanwhile, has been tagged for Massachusetts’ ranking fourth from last in job creation during his tenure. But the ex-governor has cited as strengths his business experience, stewardship of the 2002 winter Olympics and that the state moved from job losses to gains during his years in office. He also cites its improved fiscal condition, leading to a credit upgrade.

Some of the candidates have carefully targeted proposals that affect two of Iowa’s most integral industries — agriculture and manufacturing.

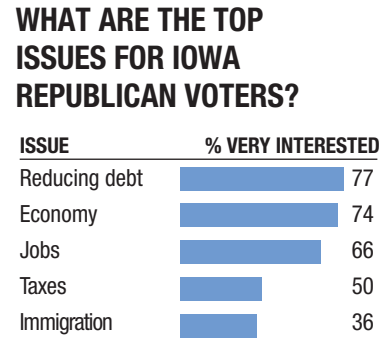
Former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum has proposed eliminating the tax on manufacturers.

Perry, meanwhile, would do away with ethanol subsidies, even the renewable fuels standard, which requires the use of a certain amount of ethanol in the nation’s fuel supply.

They say Perry’s plan will give the oil industry an advantage because it preserves its subsidies.

“The Perry energy plan is not good for Iowa’s economy or America’s security,” said Walt Wendland, president of the Iowa Renewable Fuels Association.

“I do not think it is the federal government’s business to be picking winners and losers and frankly on any of our energy sources,” Perry said earlier this month in Pella. He suggests leaving to states the option of investing in such sectors.



Source: Bloomberg News poll of 503 likely Iowa caucus-goers, Nov. 10-12. Margin of error: 4.4 percentage points. Percentage represents those who replied the issue was “critical.”

ONLINE

Want more? These websites have more details on the candidates’ plans for the economy.

MICHELE BACHMANN
★ FOR PRESIDENT ★

Michele Bachmann

michelebachmann.com/issues/americanjobsrightnow

HERMAN CAIN
President 2012

Herman Cain

hermancain.com/999

NEWT 2012

Newt Gingrich

newt.org/solutions/jobs-economy

H
JON HUNTSMAN
PRESIDENT 2012

Jon Huntsman

jon2012.com/index.php/issues/jobs-economy

NOTE: Huntsman is not actively campaigning in Iowa

RON PAUL
2012
RESTORE AMERICA NOW

Ron Paul

ronpaul2012.com/the-issues/ron-paul-plan-to-restore-america

PERRY
PRESIDENT

Rick Perry

rickperry.org/cut-balance-and-grow-html

ROMNEY
BELIEVE IN AMERICA

Mitt Romney

mittromney.com/jobs

RICK SANTORUM

Rick Santorum

ricksantorum.com/news/2011/07/courage-fight-american-jobs

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

One idea
WILLIAM MC DERMOTT

CEDAR FALLS — So Dennis Clayton thinks he knows how liberals think and therefore is a supreme judge of how easy it is to be a liberal. However, last Sun-

day, he unwittingly disproved his theme. His weekly rant really exposed how dedicated liberals are to a plethora of issues.

There is nothing easy about maintaining your rights. There is nothing easy about working

people bargaining for a decent wage. There is nothing easy about making capitalism work for the middle class when neoconservatives call that kind of capitalism socialism. There was nothing easy about women gaining the right

to vote. There was nothing easy about the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Well, I have been watching the clown car of Republican candidates during the dog and pony shows called Republican

debates. It is my turn to judge neoconservatives.

I think neoconservatives have it easy. All a neoconservative really believes is this one idea. I got mine, I want more and to heck with everyone else.

2012 IOWA CAUCUS








SOCIAL ISSUES

Economy. That has been the buzzword this campaign season. The Republicans vying for the party’s presidential nomination have issued white papers, developed policy proposals and hosted forums on just about every aspect of economic policy possible, each hoping that his or her particular mix of fiscal mojo will resonate with voters.

But all of the talk about jobs, taxes, government regulation and stimulus has left them little time to push their agendas on traditional hot-button issues such as abortion, immigration and same-sex marriage.

And among the candidates competing in Iowa there are definite differences in their ideas as far as the authority of the federal government, the responsibility of the states and the role of morality in lawmaking.

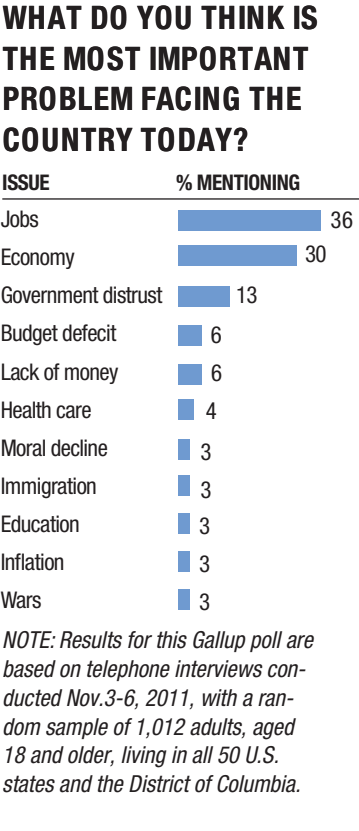
THE CANDIDATES’ VIEWS

 Bachmann	 Cain	 Gingrich	 Paul	 Perry	 Romney	 Santorum
ABORTION Anti-abortion. Supports a constitutional abortion ban. Wants the definition of persons to include unborn.	ABORTION Anti-abortion. Supports constitutional abortion ban.	ABORTION Anti-abortion. Would “like to explore” getting Congress to define life beginning at conception.	ABORTION Anti-abortion. Says abortion should be a state issue, not a federal matter.	ABORTION Anti-abortion. Supports constitutional abortion ban.	ABORTION Anti-abortion. Previously favored abortion rights. Says Roe vs. Wade should be overturned and the states should be able to make decisions on abortion.	ABORTION Anti-abortion. Supports constitutional abortion ban.
GAY MARRIAGE Supports constitutional amendment banning gay marriage.	GAY MARRIAGE Believes marriage between a man and woman should be protected by federal law.	GAY MARRIAGE Supports Defense of Marriage Act, which defines marriage as being between a man and woman but portions of it have been ruled unconstitutional and are under appeal.	GAY MARRIAGE Believes in traditional marriage, but the legalization or prohibition of it is a question best answered by the states.	GAY MARRIAGE Supports a constitutional ban on gay marriage.	GAY MARRIAGE Supports a constitutional ban on gay marriage.	GAY MARRIAGE Supports constitutional ban on gay marriage.
IMMIGRATION Favors a fence along the U.S.-Mexico border. Opposes government benefits for illegal immigrants and their children.	IMMIGRATION Says the border needs to be secure by “whatever means necessary.” He has joked that the U.S. should build a wall and a moat at the U.S.-Mexico border. Says states need to have more authority to handle the issue.	IMMIGRATION U.S. has to rethink its strategy in regard to its relationship with Mexico. Supports a way for illegal immigrants who have been here a long time some type of legal status that is short of citizenship.	IMMIGRATION Believes that the right to citizenship for the children of illegal immigrants should be repealed and supports aggressive deportation for those who overstay their visas or commit crimes.	IMMIGRATION Does not support a U.S.-Mexico border fence. Supports in-state tuition at state universities in Texas if they meet other residency requirements.	IMMIGRATION Favors fence on the U.S.-Mexico border. Opposes education benefits for illegal immigrants but supports expanding visa opportunities for students and professionals who seek or hold advanced degrees in mathematics, science and engineering.	IMMIGRATION Supports fence on U.S.-Mexico border. Says federal government should not require states to provide services to illegal immigrants.



Bob Vander Plaats, CEO of the anti-gay marriage and anti-abortion non-profit Family Leader, meets with supporters during an event in 2010 in Davenport when he was running for Iowa governor. Despite the fierce, loyal support of groups such as the Family Leader, social issues such as gay marriage and abortion don't rank high on lists of concerns among likely caucus voters.

John Schultz
QUAD-CITY TIMES FILE PHOTO



Hot-button issues are cold this year

Gay marriage, abortion take back seat to economy

By MIKE WISER
Quad-City Times Bureau

DES MOINES — Bob Vander Plaats, CEO of the anti-gay marriage and anti-abortion non-profit Family Leader, strode across the pulpit of First Federated Church in Des Moines and prepared to deliver a message to the thousands in the audience watching from the pews or from a streaming video feed.

Outside, demonstrators packed up their signs and dispersed into the church or the chilly November night. Some had held up signs of chopped-up fetuses, others had signs with biblical messages. But the largest group — about two dozen — was from the local Occupy movement. Their signs had messages about capitalism, Wall Street and the 99 percent.

The parking lot of First Federated serves almost as a microcosm of the political landscape of the country as a whole. There are activists who are committed to social issues such as gay marriage and abortion and see those as the most important issues of the 2012 election. But there are more people who worry about their jobs, making ends meet and what the stock market has done to the their 401(k) plans.

And right now, they have the ear of the presidential candidates.

“Presidential candidates tend to follow public sentiment, not the other way around,” said Den-

nis Goldford, a professor of politics and international relations at Drake University.

More than a third (36 percent) of the respondents to a recent open-ended Gallup poll, for example, picked unemployment/jobs as the biggest problem facing the U.S. The economy in general was second at 30 percent, and dissatisfaction with government was third at 13 percent.

The rest of the issues polled in single digits including social/moral decline and immigration, both which were at 3 percent. The traditional hot-button issues of abortion, same-sex marriage and immigration, it seems, haven’t been too hot this campaign season.

“I don’t feel slighted, I understand that most of the populace is concerned about the economy,” said Bill Tvedt, pastor of Jubilee Family Church in Oskaloosa.

Tvedt was among a group of three dozen Iowa pastors who took the stage with Michele Bachmann in October as the Minnesota congresswoman sought to reinforce her conservative Christian credentials with caucusgoers.

“To me, life is the main issue, everything else follows that,” he said. “But evangelicals understand the concerns of the economy. Evangelicals have to feed our families, too.”

The Republican candidates competing in Iowa — Bachmann, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, Texas Gov. Rick Perry, U.S. Rep. Ron Paul of Texas, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, businessman Herman Cain and former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum — are anti-abortion and against gay marriage.

And, with the exception of Perry, all take hard line on immigration, with several supporting building a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border and denying state benefits to illegal immigrants. Gingrich shook up a presidential debate last week with his comments on immigration as well.

“I don’t know if it’s necessarily a bad thing that (illegal immigration is) not part of the campaign at this point,” said Lori Chesser, a Des Moines immigration attorney and member of the Immigration Education Coalition executive steering committee. The coalition conducts research and provides briefs on immigration issues.

“I say that not because it’s not an important topic — it is a very important and complex one — but because the nature of political campaigns, these issues sometimes don’t get the thoughtfulness they deserve,” Chesser said.

It’s quite a difference from four years ago when then-President George W. Bush came under attack from the right for supporting a “pathway to citizenship” for illegal immigrants already in the country.

Voters called upon the Republicans and Democrats who were vying to replace Bush to discuss their ideas on immigration.

These days, however, immigration hasn’t been a major part of the debate, save for Perry having explain his support for the Texas Dream Act that provided in-state tuition benefits for illegal immigrants at state universities as long as certain other requirements are met.

Perry also has called building a complete fence on the U.S.-Mexico border “idiocy.” Bachmann,

Romney, Cain and Santorum have come out in favor of a complete border fence. Paul has said it’s appropriate to “do whatever it takes” to secure the border.

Gingrich also came under fire from his opponents when he suggested last week that illegal immigrants who have been in the U.S. a long time should be eligible for some type of legal status that is short of citizenship but allows them to stay with their families.

Chesser says immigration talk might become more prevalent as the campaign moves from Iowa and New Hampshire to other states, such as Arizona and New Mexico, where it’s seen as a more pressing issue.

In contrast, gay marriage is an issue that gets a lot of play in Iowa because of it being the first Midwestern state to legalize same-sex marriage and the fact that it was a court ruling, as opposed to an act of the Legislature, that allowed it.

All the Republican candidates say they believe that marriage should be between a man and woman. Bachmann, Perry, Romney and Santorum have come out in favor of a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage.

Iowa Sen. Roby Smith of Davenport, a freshman lawmaker who led the effort among a minority of Iowa senators this year for more restrictive abortion laws, said the presidential candidates aren’t ignoring hot-button social issues, they’re responding to the mood of the country.

“I’m conservative across the board, not just on one or two issues,” Smith said. “A lot of the conservatives I know are like that, too.”

Views of Immigration by Party

	% SHOULD BE INCREASED	% STAY AT PRESENT LEVEL	% SHOULD BE DECREASED
Democrats	21	37	37
Independents	20	37	41
Republicans	15	31	49

Source: Gallup

Views of Abortion by Party

VIEW	REPS.	IND.	DEMS.
Pro-choice	28	51	68
Pro life	67	41	27
Morally acceptable	18	45	55
Morally wrong	74	44	46
Legal in any case	13	29	38
Legal in most cases	5	9	15
Legal in a few cases	45	42	30
Illegal in all cases	34	18	14
Legal in any/most	18	38	53
Legal in few/none	79	60	44

Source: Gallup

Support for Legal Same-Sex Marriage

	% SHOULD BE LEGAL 2010	% SHOULD BE LEGAL 2011	+/-
Democrats	56	69	+13
Independents	49	59	+10
Republicans	28	28	0
Liberals	70	78	+8
Moderates	56	69	+9
Conservatives	25	28	+3
18 to 34	54	70	+16
35 to 54	50	53	+3
55 and older	33	39	+6
Men 18-49	48	61	+13
Men 50+	32	35	+5
Women 18-49	58	65	+7
Women 50+	37	45	+8

Source: Gallup

Thank you for your vote
JON CREWS
Cedar Falls mayor

CEDAR FALLS — I would like to thank the citizens of Cedar Falls for another substantial vote of confidence in the Nov. 8 election. I felt all city races were contested in a professional way without personal attacks so often seen in many state and federal elections. All three mayor candidates presented our views and plans for Cedar Falls, and we all want what is best for our city.

I look forward to working with all our City Council members, city staff and many conscientious citizens to continue to improve our city. My message was things are going well but we can and need to keep getting better. Join us in that journey. It can be a great ride!



IOWA CAUCUS

TAX POLICY







2012 might be a year when the November election returns are directly tied to voters' tax returns.

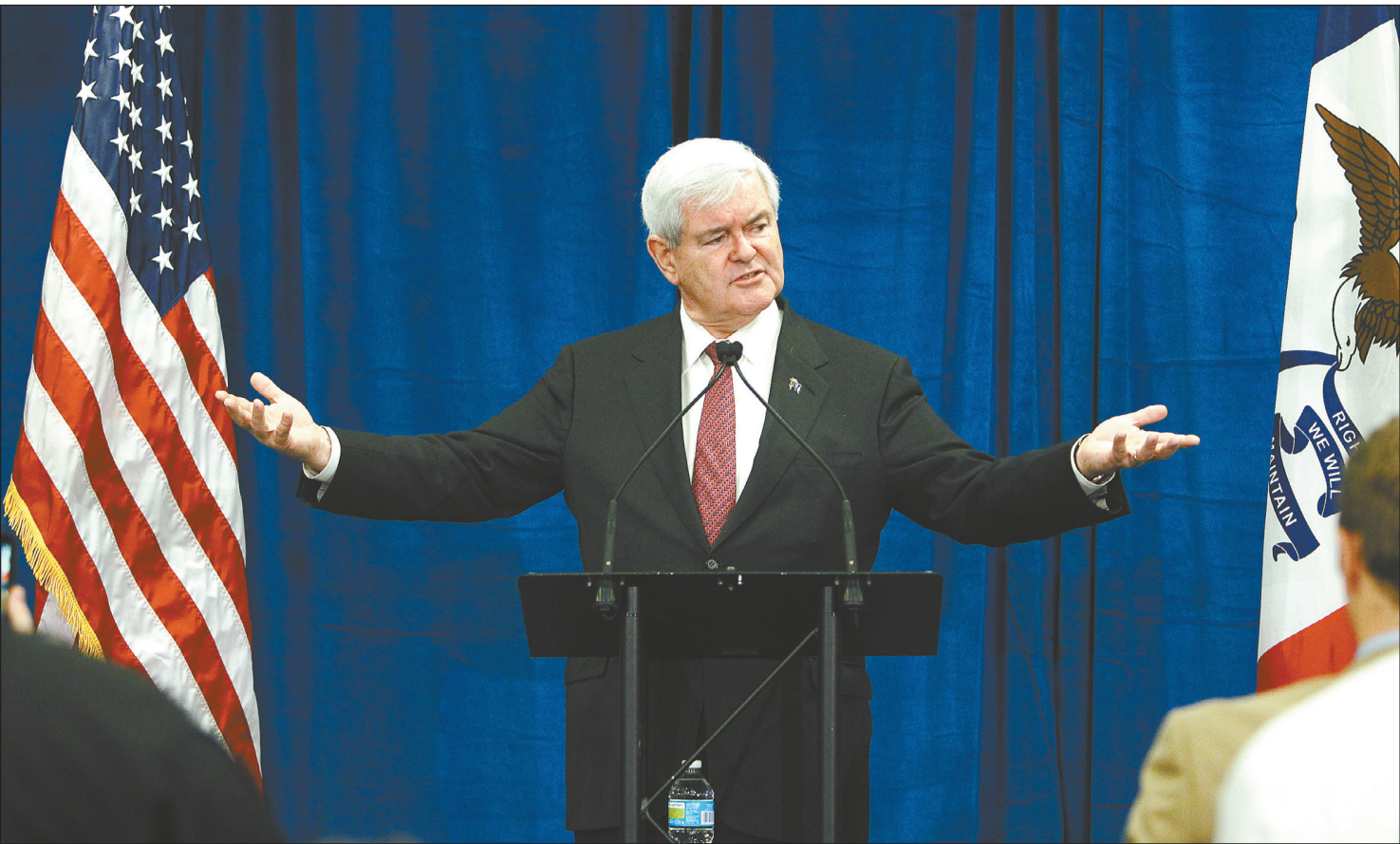
Given the sour state of the national economy and the slow rate of recovery, issues related to job creation, business climate and tax policy are being joined at the hip as voters approach next year's presidential election.

The first order of business, however, is for Republicans to select a standard-bearer they hope can successfully take back the White House next November and make Democrat Barack Obama a one-term president.

Key to that process for Republicans is choosing a candidate who offers the best plan for leading an economic renaissance that includes lower taxes and fewer government regulations they see as necessary to unfetter America's entrepreneurial spirit and innovation.

THE CANDIDATES' VIEWS

					
Bachmann	Gingrich	Paul	Perry	Romney	Santorum
Eliminates estate tax; provides short-term tax holiday for U.S. companies operating overseas that repatriate their profits followed by 5 percent rate on investment money kept here permanently; revamps corporate tax code to be fairer and simpler; cuts the number of tax brackets and requires everyone to pay some level of tax.	Gives option to file personal income taxes under the current system or pay a flat 15 percent tax on a single-page return that would retain deductions for charity and home ownership; cut corporate tax rate to 12.5 percent; eliminate estate tax and tax on capital gains; allow companies to accelerate tax write-offs for new equipment purchases.	Ends Internal Revenue Service and eliminates the federal income tax but would consider national sales tax or some excise taxes and tariffs to raise revenue; reduces corporate tax rate to 15 percent to improve America's competitive position globally; ends tax on repatriated assets made overseas to spur capital for U.S. investment; extends Bush-era tax cuts for all income brackets.	Offers taxpayers a choice of paying under the current system or under a new flat tax of 20 percent on income. Those who opt for the flat tax would pay no taxes on Social Security, dividends, capital gains and interest, but still would deduct mortgage interest, charitable donations and state and local taxes.	Cuts corporate tax rate to 25 percent to boost America's worldwide competitive position; makes Bush-era tax cuts permanent for all income brackets; opposes national sales tax; eliminates estate tax and taxes on interest, dividends, capital gains or savings for anyone with yearly adjusted gross income under \$200,000; closes loopholes to keep tax changes "revenue neutral."	Eliminates corporate tax on manufacturers who make domestic products; allows U.S. companies to repatriate capital without additional taxation to spur new investment; ends regulations placed on business by the Obama administration.



AP PHOTO

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich speaks during a recent meeting with employees at Nationwide Insurance in Des Moines. Gingrich has proposed giving taxpayers the choice of using the current system or pay a 15 percent flat tax.

Tax policy debate takes ‘center stage’

Candidates carry wide-ranging views on changes.

By ROD BOSHART
Gazette Des Moines Bureau

DES MOINES — Longtime tax discount devotee Kevin McLaughlin feels like a voice crying in the wilderness that might finally be heard.

McLaughlin, an investment adviser who chairs the Polk County Republican Party, is encouraged by the tax-cut proposals being touted by the field of GOP presidential candidates. He's hopeful that high unemployment and prolonged economic malaise shrouding Washington may spur action that enables citizens and businesses to keep more of their money from flowing to an increasingly dysfunctional government.

"There are a host of Republican candidates who get it," said McLaughlin, likening efforts to jump-start the U.S. economy without reforming federal taxes to make them simpler and flatter to "building a jet engine and not putting any fuel in it."

Fueling America's economic rebound and creating jobs are the primary focus of GOP contenders competing for the right to face Democrat Barack Obama in the 2012 general election. But that conversation has become fused with demands for tax and regulatory reform as Iowa Republicans prepare to make the first cut in the 2012 presidential nominating process.

The winnowing process

already is under way even before Iowans deliver their Jan. 3 verdict with Georgia businessman Herman Cain deciding to suspend his campaign. That development reshaped the tax policy debate by sidelining the proponent of a major "9-9-9" overhaul of the federal system loaded with what he called "thousands of hidden sneak a-taxes" that are hurting U.S. businesses.

The proposals from the remaining GOP field range from eliminating or reducing corporate income taxes, scrapping estate taxes and taxes on inheritances, providing simplified or flat-tax options or doing away with the Internal Revenue Service and eliminating the federal income tax, as Texas U.S. Rep. Ron Paul has proposed. Proposals also call for considering national sales tax or some excise taxes and tariffs to raise revenue needed to operate the government.

"We've seen tax policy take a fairly center stage in some of the presidential debate going on so far," said Matt Strawn, chairman of the Republican Party of Iowa. "I think for economic conservatives looking for some differentiation among the candidates that tax and economic policy is a great place to start."

Texas Gov. Rick Perry and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich have proposed an optional flat tax, which would let people choose between continuing to use the current system for computing their income taxes or paying a flat rate — 20 percent under Perry's plan and 15 percent under Gingrich's approach — while allowing some deductions on

taxes for expenses such as mortgage interest or charitable giving.

Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney advocates extending the tax cuts established under former President George W. Bush to maintain the current top marginal income-tax rate of 35 percent, and he is seeking to exempt taxpayers earning less than \$200,000 a year from paying taxes on capital gains, dividends or interest.

Paul, Minnesota U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann and former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum have pushed for ending taxes on repatriated assets made overseas as a way to spur capital for U.S. investment. Santorum wants to eliminate corporate taxes on manufacturers who make domestic products, and all the GOP candidates are pledging to end or ease the regulations placed on business by the Obama administration that they say are stifling innovation and entrepreneurship.

Strawn said the future course of tax policy will be a major front in the 2012 battle for control of the White House.

"You've already seen signs of that from the Democratic campaign efforts both here in Iowa and nationally with Obama's advisers," he said. "Instead of the uniter that he ran as in 2008, it's very clear the president's re-election strategy is going to try to divide Americans against each into classes, and I think that's unfortunate."

The problem, said Iowa Democratic Party chairwoman Sue Dvorsky, is the GOP field has become "an echo chamber" for congressional Republicans who are refusing to discuss any federal budget or debt solution that

would include "a more fair tax policy for millionaires and billionaires." She pointed to independent studies that indicate many of the GOP tax plans will benefit the wealthiest taxpayers.

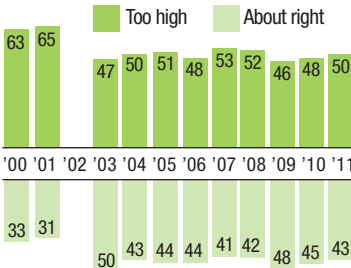
"They always say we want to play class warfare when we point out the very real fact of the matter that over the last 20 or 30 years, there has been an increasing disparity of tax policies to continue this widening gap and a crushing burden on the middle class," Dvorsky said.

Iowa tea party leader Ryan Rhodes said the debate in Washington starts from a flawed political premise that tax money is government money that it lends back to the people. In reality, "every single dime that is made by the taxpayer is the taxpayer's money, and they give money to the government to be a steward of," he said. The focus has to be on fiscal responsibility and shrinking government, not increasing taxes, he added.

University of Iowa political science associate professor Tim Hagle said, however, there is less flexibility in economic affairs now than in the 1990s. The political parties are much more polarized and federal spending is much more out of control, making it harder to find workable solutions to break the impasse. Also, he said, former President George H.W. Bush agreed to tax increases as part of a balanced budget solution, but "the cuts never came," so Republicans are determined not to go down that road again.

"It's the details that get sticky," Hagle said.

IS THE AMOUNT OF TAX YOU PAY TOO HIGH, ABOUT RIGHT OR TOO LOW?



NOTE: percent saying "too low" not shown
Source: Gallup

PERCEPTION OF TAXES PAID BY INCOME GROUPS, CORPORATIONS

	TOO MUCH	FAIR SHARE	TOO LITTLE
Middle-income	44%	50%	5%
Lower-income	40%	37%	21%
Upper-income	13%	25%	59%
Corporations	9%	20%	67%

Source: April 7-11 Gallup poll

VIEWS ABOUT OWN TAXES BY INCOME

By annual household income	<\$30K	30-49	50-99	100-249	>250
Too high	45	49	51	54	67
About right	43	47	47	43	26
Too low	4	2	2	3	6
Yes, fair	60	63	60	59	44
No, not fair	31	34	38	40	55

PERCEPTION OF TAXES PAID BY INCOME GROUPS

By annual household income	<\$30K	30-49	50-99	100-249	>250
UPPER-INCOME PEOPLE					
Fair share	19	21	25	29	30
Too much	8	9	10	15	38
Too little	67	67	64	55	30
MIDDLE-INCOME PEOPLE					
Fair share	48	50	50	51	48
Too much	39	43	46	46	45
Too little	10	5	2	2	7
LOWER-INCOME PEOPLE					
Fair share	28	35	42	43	46
Too much	56	48	39	36	25
Too little	13	14	17	18	26

DO YOU REGARD THE INCOME TAX YOU WILL HAVE TO PAY AS FAIR?



Source: Gallup

BY THE NUMBERS

20 percent flat tax proposed by Texas Gov. Rick Perry.

15 percent flat tax proposed by former House Speaker Newt Gingrich.

\$200,000 Taxpayers earning less than that a year would be exempt from paying tax on capital gains, dividends or interest.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

EPA or Postal Service?

JUDY TYLER
RANDALIA — I mailed my Christmas cards (60-70) right after Thanksgiving, planning for plenty of time to reach everyone on my list. A few days later I started

receiving phone calls and emails that the recipients received only the front of the envelope. No card, no back of the envelope, just the front. (At least they got that so they know I was thinking of them.)
The following Tuesday I

phoned our local post office, which is 10 miles away because they closed "our" post office a couple of years ago. I was informed that using "recycled paper envelopes" can cause the date machine to tear the envelopes

quite badly, as it is thinner. OK?!
The EPA has told us to use recycled products, now the Postal Service tells us not to. Wow! This causes a little confusion — EPA or Postal Service? I like the idea of saving the environment, but the Postal

Service showed proof 70-plus years ago that there really is a Santa Claus. They would not lie, so I guess I will ask retailers if their envelopes are recycled then purchase only those cards and envelopes that have recently killed another tree.

2012

IOWA CAUCUS

NATIONAL DEBT







This year, the national debt topped \$15 trillion, with another \$1.3 trillion in federal deficit spending projected for next year. On the campaign trail, Republican candidates have spoken of the debt as a giant bogeyman threatening to crush the American economy and Americans' way of life.

The national debt has risen to the same level as the gross domestic product for the first time since World War II, when debt grew to 120 percent of the GDP.

Candidates offer a mix of spending cuts, constitutional amendments and institutional cuts to help make up the deficit. None of the candidates favors more stimulus spending to spark growth in the economy.

Their differences are often subtle in seeking to rein in government spending and erase the deficit.

THE CANDIDATES' VIEWS

					
Bachmann	Gingrich	Paul	Perry	Romney	Santorum
Opposed the agreement to raise the debt ceiling and avoid a default. Thinks U.S. should have paid only the interest on the debt while working out a plan for deeper spending cuts. Considers repeal of new federal health-care law as a crucial first step to cutting the deficit. Voted in favor of Rep. Paul Ryan's plan to reform Medicare.	As House speaker in mid-1990s, engineered passage of a seven-year balanced budget plan. It was vetoed by President Bill Clinton but helped form a bipartisan balanced budget two years later. Supports constitutional balanced budget amendment. Seeks to balance the budget by growing the economy, controlling spending, implementing reforms and replacing destructive policies.	Pledges massive cuts immediately after taking office. Would close five Cabinet-level agencies: Education, Energy, Commerce, Interior and Housing and Urban Development. Plans to cut \$1 trillion in spending in his first year and have a balanced budget within three years. He proposes ending foreign wars and eliminating foreign aid from the budget.	Proposes to cap federal spending at 18 percent of gross domestic product, down from 25 percent today. Spending cuts have not been laid out in detail but include reducing education funding for elementary and secondary programs by 50 percent, cuts in Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and eliminating earmarks. Favors constitutional balanced budget amendment and stands against any more bailouts.	Proposes a 10 percent cut in federal work force and elimination of \$1.6 billion in Amtrak subsidies and cuts of \$600 million in support for the public arts and broadcasting. Supports a hard cap on spending at 20 percent of gross domestic product, down from 25 percent today. Supports repeal of federal health-care law. Supports a constitutional balanced budget amendment.	Opposed the financial industry bailout and stimulus programs of the Bush and Obama administrations. Supports constitutional balanced budget amendment. Voted six times on raising the debt ceiling between 1993 and 2006, five times in favor of it and once against it. Says the debt-to-GDP ratio was going down when he voted for the debt-ceiling increases.



Rick Montgomery holds a protest sign about federal spending and increased taxes at a tea party rally in 2009 in Waterloo. Many Republican candidates for president are trying to gain the support of the tea party movement with plans to reduce the national debt.

Candidates fight to champion debt reduction

Hopefuls attempt to gain tea party support

By JON ERICSON
Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier

If the Republican primaries were held in late June or early July, the national debt would have been far and away the most important issue.

Washington, D.C., was bogged down in political rhetoric and doomsday prophecies as Congress struggled to raise the debt ceiling so the U.S. could pay its bills.

Choosing a Republican candidate would have been difficult, as nearly the entire field talked up his or her ability to rein in spending and voiced their distaste for raising the debt ceiling.

But the debt-ceiling crisis was averted, and the hot issue moved on. But debt and deficit issues never strayed far from voters' minds. Voters aligning with the tea party movement placed even greater emphasis on the national debt.

Justin Holmes, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Northern Iowa, said concerns about the national debt tend to rise and fall in cycles. Current concerns about the debt, however, have been magnified by European debt problems and a downgrade of one credit rating of the U.S.

All of the candidates propose steep spending cuts, some spelling them out in more depth than others.

Newt Gingrich loves to lean on his record in the House, particularly when he took over as speaker in 1994, when it comes to the national debt. Gingrich and the Republicans passed a balanced budget plan then, only to have it vetoed by President Bill Clinton. He later worked with Clinton and Senate Democrats to get a balanced budget passed.

"We went from \$2.2 trillion in projected deficits over a decade to \$2.7 trillion projected surplus when I left," Gingrich said during the Sept. 22 debate in Orlando, Fla. He went on to say the current debt situation is worse, but the country can get back on track. "I believe it is doable, but it takes real leadership."

Mitt Romney supports deep cuts in the budget, wanting to set a spending cap at 20 percent of the gross domestic product, down from 25 percent today. He emphasizes growing the economy as the key to balancing the budget and working at the debt, however.

"The idea of just cutting and taxing more, I understand mathematically those things work, but nothing works as well as getting the economy going," he said at the Nov. 11 debate in New Hampshire. "Get Americans back to work. Get them paying taxes again. Get cor-

porations growing and investing in America."

Gingrich also talks often about how the economy needs to take off to allow for real debt reduction. Holmes, the UNI professor, thinks the two candidates are on the right track.

"It's a longer-term problem. Most economists will say in the short term it's the wrong time for large cuts. If we can get the economy growing, we will see less of a problem with the debt-to-gross domestic product issue," Holmes said.

Ron Paul, who is polling in second place in some polls in Iowa, has clear plans for reducing the deficit. He draws applause every time he mentions cutting five departments from the federal government. The Texas congressman has touted his plan to cut \$1 trillion from the budget in his first year and balancing the budget within three years.

When Michele Bachmann appeared before a hall crowded with University of Northern Iowa students at an education forum earlier this month, she spoke of how she didn't want to throw money into federal spending on education and student loans. But she did tell students that the federal government needs to cut down on the national debt to clear the way for a brighter future for today's young people.

"Their tax rates won't be our tax rates. Their tax rates someday

in their peak earning years could be 75 percent," Bachmann said at the New Hampshire debates.

"Who's going to get out of bed in the morning when tax rates are 75 percent?"

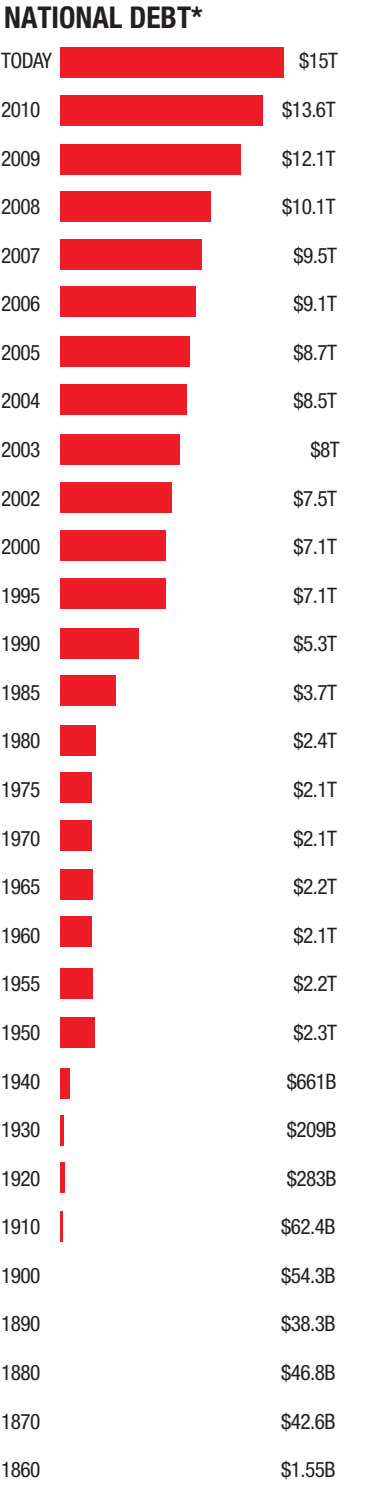
She sees repeal of the federal healthcare law as a crucial first step to cutting 40 percent of the federal budget.

Rick Perry and Rick Santorum have called for severe budget cuts. Like the rest of the field, they support a balanced budget amendment. Perry sees it as a core component of fiscal responsibility. In the New Hampshire debates, Perry said the next president needs to make that a priority and spend time making sure it happens.

The largest budget items, in order, are Medicare/Medicaid, Social Security and national defense.

University of Iowa economics professor John Solow said the real long-term impact on the national debt depends on changes to Medicare/Medicaid and Social Security.

"We have known for some time something needs to be done with Social Security and Medicare. This has been on the radar screen forever," Solow said. "Some combination of reduction in benefits and increases in revenues has to happen. There is no magic bullet or magic wand to make this go away."



*Adjusted for inflation
Source: U.S. Department of Treasury

POLLS

What would you do to reduce the deficit?

	YES	NO	NO OPINION
Increase taxes	60%	33	7
Cut defense	47	51	2
Social Security/			
Medical changes	42	56	2
Cut other programs	59	37	3
Tax the rich	66	33	1

Source: Gallup poll Aug. 4-7

Who do you trust to do a better job of reducing the deficit?

	DEMS.	REPS.	NEITHER
June 16-20	40	43	14
May 5-9	42	40	15
March 24-28	42	43	12
January 5-10	41	41	15
November 18-22, 2010	38	44	13
October 13-18, 2010	40	48	11
September 8-13, 2010	40	47	12

Source: GfK Roper Public Affairs & Corporate Communications poll

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Stop testing on animals
LINDSEY HARKRIDER
Eighth grade
George Washington Carver Academy

WATERLOO — Do you care about animals and what scientists do to them? They are being tested on every day.

Medical testing on animals is not acceptable. Inspections of animal testing laboratories by veterinary officers from the Department of Agriculture found that rats in one facility developed a disease because they were

housed in a warehouse with no moisture in the air. Claims that animal testing has or will lead to cures for every human ailment are powerful but there is little scientific evidence to back them up.

Animals are not routinely treated well by animal experimenters. Apart from the fact that millions of animals die each year in experiments, others are often not adequately anesthetized and are abused by handlers and

experimenters. Some people think it's acceptable to test on animals because they think it will help develop new cures for many diseases, but in reality it's not helping anyone and animal bodies rarely serve as good

models for humans. In conclusion, I think that testing on animals is wrong and a complete waste of time and money. Others who enjoy the company of animals will say the same. Pledge to be cruelty free.



IOWA CAUCUS

HOW TO CAUCUS

First-in-the-nation means that the eyes of this nation, and even some others, will be on Iowa Jan. 3 as the first official voting of the 2012 presidential campaign season takes place.

Republicans will have the opportunity to vote at precinct caucuses around the state from a slate of presidential candidates. Candidates include Rep. Michele Bachmann, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman, U.S. Rep. Ron Paul, Texas Gov. Rick Perry, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney and former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum. Former candidate Herman Cain also is on the ballot, but he has suspended his campaign.

The winner in Iowa doesn't always end up with the party's nomination. Four years ago, Republican voters gave Mike Huckabee the victory in Iowa, but he couldn't overcome John McCain in other states. Rather, the Iowa caucuses often serve to narrow the field; generally, political observers say three people can punch a ticket out of the state and remain in competition in New Hampshire's primary and beyond.

On the Democratic side this year, there's no suspense. President Barack Obama will be the nominee, but some Democratic caucusgoers will get a chance to hear from their candidate, who will be calling in and appearing via video-conference.



Caucus worker Jim Stoycheff signs up a steady line of Democratic caucus participants shortly before the official 7 p.m. start of the Ward 2, Precinct 6 caucuses at Hoover Middle School, Jan. 3, 2008 in Waterloo.

RICK CHASE / Courier Staff Photographer

Sign here to caucus QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Q: What is a caucus?

A: The word caucus is a North American Indian word, thought to be of Algonquin origin, meaning a gathering of the ruling tribal chiefs. The modern definition describes caucuses as a process of political party members gathering to make policy decisions and to select candidates.

Q: How did the caucuses begin?

A: Some form of caucus has existed since the early 1800s, even before Iowa became a state in 1846. Developing from the congressional and legislative caucuses, the pioneers of the Iowa Constitution chose caucuses rather than a primary election to nominate candidates, preferring the grassroots democracy-in-action approach.

Q: When are the caucuses?

A: Democrats and Republicans will gather Tuesday, Jan. 3, at precincts across Iowa to choose presidential candidates and discuss party issues. Both parties begin their caucuses at 7 p.m. The parties actually hold caucuses every two years, but usually get attention, a lot of it, only during presidential years.

Q: Who can participate?

A: Any voter who is a registered Republican or Democrat, and can prove residency in Iowa, can participate in the caucus of their party. Those who will be 18 years old in time for the general election in November also can participate.

Q: Who runs the caucuses?

A: The caucuses are run by the parties, not state election officials.

Q: Where do you go?

A: To find your caucus location, check your voter registration card for your voting precinct and call the Iowa Democratic Party at 515-244-7292 or go to www.iowademocrats.org or the Republican Party of Iowa at 515-282-8105 or go to www.iowagop.org. The 1,784 precinct caucuses statewide are held in church basements, fire stations, schools and libraries.

Q: How did the Iowa caucus gain its first-in-the nation status?

A: In the early 1970s, the Iowa Democratic Party made several reforms to their delegate selection process. These reforms included requiring a minimum of 30 days between the precinct caucuses and the county, district and state conventions, and publicizing the events to allow more people to take part in the process. When the 1972 Democratic State Convention was set for May 20, the new rules dictated that the precinct caucus would be Jan. 24, thereby making it the first statewide test for presidential candidates in the nation. In 1976, recognizing the increased exposure, the Republican Party of Iowa moved its caucus to the same date as the Democrats. The candidates and national media have observed the Iowa caucuses as the "First in the Nation" ever since.

Q: Do you have to be registered as a Democrat or a Republican? What about independents?

A: Voters can show up and register or switch party registration at the caucus site. You must register Democrat to participate in the Democratic caucus and Republican to go to the GOP caucus. To register at the Republican sites, you need a valid photo ID.

Q: Is there any penalty for sneaking into a caucus?

A: If a caucusgoer is found to have lied about identity or residency, that person can be fined up to \$7,500, but that rarely happens.

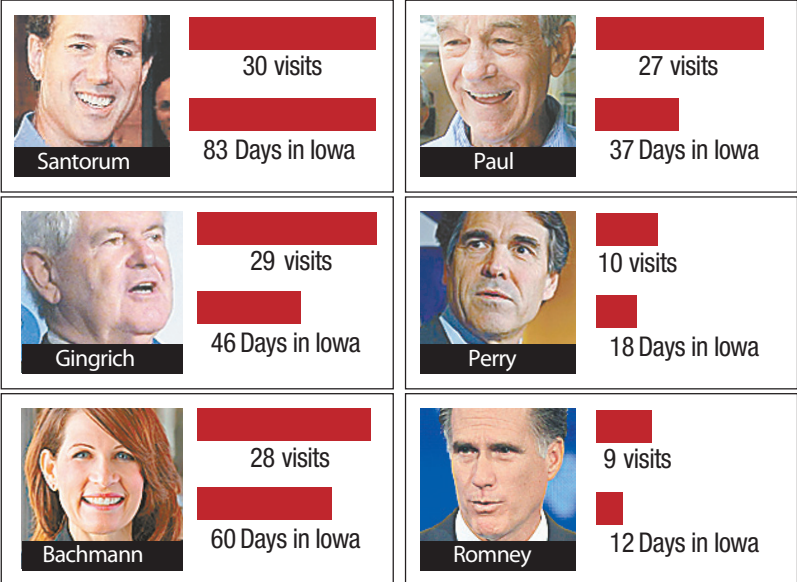
Q: How do you vote in the caucuses?

A: Unlike what most Americans are accustomed to, there's no voting booth in the very public process. The methods differ between the Democrats and Republicans.

Q: How many people are expected to participate in the Iowa caucuses?

A: There are 613,521 registered Republicans and 645,475 registered Democrats in the state; total voter registration is 2,111,548. The parties don't predict turnout, but in 2008, 239,000 Democrats took part, and 120,000 Republicans caucused. It was a big year for caucus turnout. In 2004, 124,000 Democrats took part, and 87,000 Republicans caucused in 2000 in a contested GOP event.

CANDIDATE VISITS TO IOWA SINCE 2008



Source: Democracy in Action, visits through Wednesday.

HOW IT WORKS

Republicans

■ Caucuses start at 7 p.m. Because it is already 8 p.m. on the East Coast, party leaders have opted to conduct the presidential preference polling early in the caucuses to accommodate the national radio and TV networks, which are trying to get results on the air during primetime.

■ Activists at each meeting elect a leader, then backers of each candidate deliver speeches on their behalf.

■ Presidential preference selection on the Republican side is done with a straw vote of those attending the caucuses.

■ After the results are sent to a central reporting system, people turn to party business, such as beginning to write a party platform, electing precinct officers and picking delegates to county conventions in March.

■ For information, go to the Iowa Republican Party website at iowagop.org. You can also download an app for your iPhone or android-based smart phone.



Democrats

■ The Democratic caucus process is more complicated, but because President Barack Obama faces no opposition, there will be less attention paid to the presidential selection process. Democrats still will hold caucuses across the state as an organizing effort to get ready for the 2012 general election. Registration begins at 6:30 p.m., and the caucuses begin at 7 p.m. Obama is scheduled to talk with caucusgoers via video-conferencing and calls to selected sites on caucus nights. Details of that have not yet been released.

■ For information, go to the Iowa Democratic Party website at iowademocrats.org and click on "The Caucuses."

IOWA CAUCUS WINNERS/PARTY NOMINEES

Caucus winner is pictured

REPUBLICANS

2008
WINNER: Mike Huckabee
NOMINEE: John McCain



2004
WINNER: George W. Bush
(unopposed)



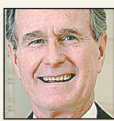
2000
WINNER: George W. Bush
NOMINEE: Bush



1996
WINNER: Bob Dole
NOMINEE: Dole



1992
WINNER: George H.W. Bush
(unopposed)
NOMINEE: Bush



1988
WINNER: Bob Dole
NOMINEE: George H.W. Bush



1984
WINNER: Ronald Reagan
(unopposed)
NOMINEE: Reagan



1980
WINNER: George H.W. Bush
NOMINEE: Ronald Reagan



1976
WINNERS: Gerald Ford
NOMINEE: Ford



NOTE: Iowa GOP caucuses weren't on same date in 1972.
*Uncommitted received the highest amount of votes.

DEMOCRATS

2008
WINNER: Barack Obama
NOMINEE: Obama



2004
WINNER: John Kerry
NOMINEE: Kerry



2000
WINNER: Al Gore
NOMINEE: Gore



1996
WINNER: Bill Clinton
(unopposed)



1992
WINNER: Tom Harkin
NOMINEE: Bill Clinton



1988
WINNER: Dick Gephardt
NOMINEE: Michael Dukakis



1984
WINNER: Walter Mondale
NOMINEE: Mondale



1980
WINNER: Jimmy Carter
NOMINEE: Carter



1976
WINNER: Jimmy Carter*
NOMINEE: Carter



1972
WINNER: Edmund Muskie*
NOMINEE: George McGovern



Black Hawk County Republicans, Democrats adopt one-stop shopping approach to caucuses

Black Hawk County voters have it easy on caucus night.

Republicans and Democrats each let voters from all precincts meet in a single location. For Republicans it is the UNI-Dome in Cedar Falls. Democrats will meet at Central Middle School in Waterloo.

The Republicans expect a big

crowd as the caucuses feature a competitive field for the presidential nomination. Republicans will open the doors at 5:30 p.m. and encourage people to come early to get a chance to meet candidates, all of whom have been invited to the caucus site. The caucus proceedings will start at 7 p.m.

Democrats will open the doors at 5 p.m. The caucus events are slated to start at 6:30 p.m. with delegate elections at 7 p.m. or later.

In other counties, caucus sites will be broken down by voting precincts.

The state Republican party has established an application for

iPhones and Androids to help caucusgoers find the site where they can attend their precinct caucus. It can be found by searching for "IowaGOP2012" in the respective applications stores for those mobile devices. Voters can also visit www.iowagop.org/caucus and click a link to the secretary of

state's precinct finder. Once the precinct is located, voters can go back to the Iowa GOP site, click on "Find My Caucus" and the click "View by County" to locate their precinct caucus location.

Democrats have a similar tool on their website at www.iowademocrats.org.